

# Constructive Conflict Transformation

Training Manual For School Counselors

by Stephan Clauss

Includes discourse "Working with Constructive Conflict Transformation  
in Palestine" by Ulrike Ramlow and Stephan Clauss

"Even the longest Way starts with a first Step"  
Chinese Proverb

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## Preface

Countless professionals, para-professionals, and support systems contributed to the development of a significant set of standards and rules aimed at building a state of the art Palestinian educational system. However, the key to success is rooted in effective implementation by knowledgeable and skilled staff on the ground.

School counseling is acknowledged as a major field in the education system. It plays a critical role in holding pieces together and creating harmony within schools – harmony among staff, students, and school environment- as mental health would be their ultimate goal.

School counselors are the lynchpin. Schools are their field, staff and students are their beneficiaries and the way they function is their target. "Conflict" is among the behavioral and emotional issues that emerge on a daily basis and keeps their hands full. It manifests itself in many different ways and stands as a main obstacle in the education cycle.

Therefore, internal conflicts in schools should be recognized as a strategically managed problem, and comprehend the inter-connectedness that exists within and across all systems on micro and macro levels. Thus, choosing professional counselors adequate in numbers and expertise and deciding on the appropriate intervention strategies becomes critical. As neither a specific strategy nor intervention method is suitable in solving every conflict, strategies should be tailored to the existing conflict in order to sustain its effects over a longer period.

The "in-hand" manual has been progressively developed over the last four years within the partnership project between *Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy (MEND)/Palestine* and the *Center for Education and Encounter in Nonviolent Action KURVE Wustrow/Germany*. Efforts were funneled empirically into planning, implementation and evaluation taking into consideration that everyone – not just professionals- can enjoy its remarkable benefits. The manual can be used following only a brief study. It is full of practical exercises complemented with brief essential information such as exercise objectives. Furthermore, due to subject complexity, which renders any approach imperfect, manual users are advised to own and filter the concepts of mediation, conflict management and transformation. It's a crucial step towards success and feeling integrated with what they do. Then, exercises become flexible enough for modification in accordance to trainer and trainees' needs and backgrounds.

Finally, vertical –as well as horizontal- communication within and between organizations and interest groups should be encouraged in order to share information and benefit from the feedback.

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## A strategy for change Aim and Purpose of this manual

### *Schools in Palestine*

Schools are a focal point for the challenges a society faces. In Palestine, schools have to deal with rapid growth of the population: some 56 % of society is younger than 19<sup>1</sup> years. There are not enough teachers and too few schools<sup>2</sup>. The economic situation in Palestine is increasingly difficult: some families can barely afford to cover the expenses related to send their kids to school (such as books/supplies, school uniforms, daily travel expenses, etc.). Questions remain open as to how one can balance values of traditionalism with external influences and finding new ways beyond these two. Additionally, in many cases the military occupation by the Israeli army plays an amplifying as well as causal role in many aspects in Palestine. In all, financial, organizational and infrastructural resources remain a challenge to build a fully functional educational system. The overall effect on youth is multi-faceted: They suffer from stress, are traumatized, overactive or introverted, resort to violence themselves, and some kids leave school at a young age to work as street vendors, just to mention a couple of the direct and indirect effects. The Palestinian *Ministry of Education and Higher Education* (MoE) is well aware of the urgent need to address this situation in Palestinian schools, yet faces a predicament in attempting to do so: Who can start working on such a complex situation and how in order to change things for the better? In 1996/97, the MoE chose establishing a school counseling system as one approach. Since this time, professionals, so called "school counselors", are responsible for dealing with social issues at schools.

### *No emergency task force: a strategy for Conflict Transformation and Nonviolence for Palestinian Schools*

While employing counselors has been an innovative and important step forward, the counselors certainly still face the above-mentioned question: Where shall they start in such a complex situation as outlined above? Certainly, schools would benefit from a general improvement of the situation in Palestine. This, however, requires a comprehensive approach on many levels, which is often out of the hands of counselors. Yet, to a considerable extent, they do have the means to work for a change in their specific areas of influence on a social level. In this context, it is important to keep in mind an important point: Although addressing social issues is their full time job, they should not be the "emergency task force" at schools to deal with "everything". They are confronted with multiple problems, which result in an overwhelmingly heavy workload. It also requires many professional skills and very often, this burdens them with heavy psychological pressure. Thus, in order to be effective, it is important to move from quick short-term emergency interference towards a long-term strategic intervention within the context of schools.

In order to find a starting point for a change on such a strategic level, the German nongovernmental organization *Center for Education and Networking in Nonviolent Action KURVE Wustrow*/Germany conducted a feasibility study in fall 2001. The outcome of this study suggested, after careful research on site and close consultation with locals, to support school counselors in enhancing their skills in conflict transformation. Fundamental structural problems and general conditions were unlikely be changed through this approach. Yet, it was still seen as a promising as well as feasible entry point, representing an effective and strategic way to work towards change. Accordingly, in August 2002 the Palestinian nongovernmental organization *Middle*



*East Nonviolence and Democracy*, MEND in East-Jerusalem and the *Center of Education and Encounter in Nonviolent Action KURVE Wustrow* launched a partnership project, supporting Palestinian school counselors with training in conflict transformation over a period of four years until July 2006. The project took place in the framework of a large-scale innovative program called *Civil Peace Service (CPS)* developed by civil society groups in Germany and launched in 1998. CPS is an approach of development cooperation funded by the *German Ministry of Economical Cooperation and Development (BMZ)*. It aims at supporting projects of local partner organizations in areas of crises, which seek to prevent violent conflicts from erupting, help strengthening peaceful conflict transformation or contribute towards peace building.

Within the partnership, a German-Palestinian team provided training in constructive conflict transformation to counselors from East-Jerusalem and suburbs, Ramallah, Tulkarem, Jenin and Qabatia between October 2002 and November 2005. Beyond the basic skills around conflict transformation, it was important for the project team to pass on the idea of a long-term and strategic approach to conflict transformation when dealing with conflicts and violence as well as to allow stress relief. Many training courses tend to emphasize the idea of tools for targeted, quick and effective intervention and lack a long-term and strategic vision towards change. Therefore, the German-Palestinian team chose to work in a multi-level approach, rather than providing "just training".

First, the style in which training sessions were conducted reflects this idea. Understanding conflict transformation is a long-term process and ongoing task, rather than short-term quick intervention. The process-oriented understanding of conflict transformation was an integral element of an interactive and participatory approach to training focusing more on learning processes than on the transfer of tools. In addition, the team attempted to give continuous support to the trainees through follow-ups after the actual training, creating a space for reflection and feedback around the issues dealt with throughout the training. Further, in order to ensure sustainability, a selected group received advanced training, enabling these participants to pass on their knowledge to other colleagues who have not been part of the project. Finally, a comprehensive training manual has been developed, documenting the approach to conflict transformation and training applied throughout the project, as well as activities and models that have been used.

#### *A Training Manual for School Counselors*

The manual does not represent a thoroughly new idea. However, it does not just assemble the input of the workshops or reproduce activities from elsewhere. The manual is a comprehensive compilation of the experiences throughout four years of work with Palestinian school counselors. All of the activities, even if taken – with reference to the source – from elsewhere, are customized to the general concept and context; some of the activities even have been newly invented. The team has applied and tested all of the activities in the local context. Finally, still today there is very little of this kind of material available in Arabic. The manual primarily serves to support the counselors in addressing issues related to conflict and violence at schools. It is

- a resource for reviewing and applying the content and approach of the training courses
- a guideline for developing workshops with students in schools
- a guideline for training counselor colleagues or other adults in constructive conflict transformation

Most of the activities described in this manual apply to youth from the age of 9 to 18, and some to younger children between 5 and 8. To support, in particular, the work with counselor colleagues and/or other adults (teachers, families etc.), the manual also contains some activities that apply in particular to adults. It is especially desirable that in the future teachers (and families) are introduced to the idea of constructive conflict transformation. Certainly, teachers are under the pressure of fulfilling their educational assignment and time does not seem to be sufficient. Yet, the teaching suffers in an environment disrupted by conflicts and violence. The teachers' educational assignment will benefit from successful implementation of such a program. Teachers could find ways to integrate one or the other activity in the daily teaching curriculum<sup>3</sup>. All of this requires a long-term perspective and ongoing commitment by counselors as well as teachers and the directorate of a school. Only if all work together - even families - the combined effort is likely to be fruitful and give a more satisfying answer to the question of who starts and where to start.

#### *How to use this manual*

This manual consists of a preface, an introduction, three central parts as well as an appendix.

Part I and II are the theoretical parts of the manual. Before starting a training course, it is crucial to carefully read and understand the underlying theories behind the concept. **Part I** addresses basic definitions: How to define conflict as well as violence, and what is constructive conflict transformation and nonviolence. As many books and essays concerning these topics already exist, this chapter intends to introduce the basics only. It is meant as a stimulus for trainers to think further, discuss with colleagues, friends or family and to do more additional research independently. **Part II** outlines advices for the practical as well as conceptual approach to conflict transformation training including explanations about what needs to be considered when designing and implementing a training course.

**Part III** is the practical section of the manual. It assembles various sample activities around the idea of constructive conflict transformation and nonviolence. The activities are classified in chapters addressing different topics. They also emphasize the overall concept introduced in Part II. A paragraph precedes every chapter, providing the basic theoretical explanation for the following topic. All activities in this manual follow a template structure that is outlined in the beginning of Part III.

The **Appendix** contains a sample schedule that applies for students and for adults (slight adaptations that are necessary are indicated), a sample questionnaire for evaluation as well as a short list with literature, internet links for further research and contact addresses. The sample course may serve as a guideline for users to design and implement their own workshops.

When designing and implementing training courses the recommendations and basic concept given in Part I and II are substantial. They, - and not the template activities or the suggested schedule - should be the guidelines when designing a training workshop.

Not only school counselors but also many people working in the social field may use the manual. However, one difficulty with written material remains: users understand activities a lot better, when experiencing them rather than just reading the instructions. Therefore, it is advisable for inexperienced readers to get into contact with people who have been part of this project or have experience in conflict transformation. Counselors or teachers may contact the *Ministry of Education and Higher Education* in Ramallah in order to get in touch (see appendix for contact details). Another possibility is to ask for support from people or institutions with

knowledge or experience in this field (see appendix for a selection of names).

This manual neither assumes to be comprehensive nor an ultimo ratio for training of conflict transformation and nonviolence! It is supposed to give a hand with ideas for designing and implementing training, developing a program and working for change. The activities may be used in the way they are described but equally, should inspire the creativity of its users. All of the activities may be altered, or be combined in a certain way; new activities can be invented or activities known from elsewhere can be added. Certainly, not all activities need to be used in order to conduct a comprehensive training. Just as constructive conflict transformation, this manual lives on creativity! As such, it should serve as a source to support counselors in their important work as well as anyone else committed in this field and sustain the outcome of the MEND/KURVE Wustrow project after its end in July 2006. Any feedback or comments are warmly appreciated and welcome at [stephanclauss@hotmail.com](mailto:stephanclauss@hotmail.com) or [info@kurviewustrow.org](mailto:info@kurviewustrow.org).

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<sup>1</sup> PCBS, Statistical Abstract for Palestine No.6, 2005

<sup>2</sup> The average number of students per class in governmental schools as to a statistic of the Ministry of Education in 2005/2006 is 34.5.

<sup>3</sup> Of course, a teacher cannot transform his/her class in a workshop. Yet, it is possible to incorporate some of the activities of a training course, such as an activity for relief of tension or stress within the class, in order to subsequently continue working with more attentive students.

## Discourse: Working with Constructive Conflict Transformation in Palestine

This manual on hand is the English version of the Arabic edition to make its content available also to a non-Arabic speaking audience. Furthermore, this English version includes the following discourse about the contextualization of Constructive Conflict Transformation methods within a Palestinian context. It intends to pass to the Anglophone reader some basic lessons learnt within the two joint projects of KURVE Wustrow, Palestinian organization MEND and the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees. These projects aim at strengthening conflict transformation skills of school counselors and of women community leaders and trainers. Even though the target groups and the framework for implementation differ, we have still faced similar challenges and learnt similar lessons.

### *The cultural context*

As other any other – even not necessarily conflict ridden - societies, the Palestinian society is dynamic and constantly in flux. Any attempt to describe its status or categorize the direction where it is going from a Western perspective runs the risk of resorting to incorrect stereotypes. Cautious to avoid making this same mistake, we herewith provide a résumé of our experiences. The following outline is based on our observations of working and living as a Westerner in this society. To us the relevant issues facing the Palestinian society in the context of Constructive Conflict Transformation are as follows: individuality and collectivity, communication patterns (direct versus indirect), acceptance of authority, attitude towards seniority and the definition of the role of men as well as women.

The construction of the society is largely based on the principal of collectivity. This obviously influences the way people perceive conflict as well as their way of dealing with them. Conflict poses a direct threat to actors of the society: the family, a community etc. The well-being of the individual depends largely on the well-being of the community/the collective. Maintaining harmony on the large scale takes precedence over the prevention of conflicts between individuals. A representative of the collective takes the responsibility to do deal with conflicts. This can be the father within a family or a religious leader on a community level. Sulha (Arabic for "reconciliation"), a traditional Middle Eastern method for dealing with conflicts, is rooted in this concept.

In this context, authority deriving from gender, seniority and the clan dynamic (through long-term influence, wealth, social or political achievements and affiliations) plays an important role. Inherent to his authority, a senior community member holds responsibility for the process of finding a solution to the conflict, and its implementation. While this approach makes it very difficult for people to express their individual needs and their feelings as well as assume individual responsibility, individuals still fulfill vital functions within the collective. An additional consideration is the maintenance of dignity in public which would therefore require the conflict to be addressed indirectly using story telling or transferring the message through a third person.

Another important factor is the role of men and women. Depending on geographical area, the level of education etc. the power balance between men and women varies. In general, the daily lives of men and women are traditionally separated. While the men's domain is usually outside of the house, a women's role is restricted to the home. Women find themselves primarily responsible for taking care of the family (the children) and the household. This role is well respected and honored. "Old" mothers enjoy a rather powerful position. While it seems that men enjoy more autonomy than women do, both have to submit their individual needs to the ones of the collective. This patriarchal structure excludes women from participating in conflict transformation. In the Sulha, they practically do not have any role (beside - in some cases - separating parties in violent clashes). Therefore, most women organizations are struggling to strengthen the juridical system.

Honor plays an important role as well. Maintaining one's honor is crucial to the coherence of the collective. In this context, women's immaculacy unlike that of men is especially important. In recent times, the political situation combined with this attitude towards honor has led to a considerable number of so-called honor killings (see Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling, <http://www.wclac.org/>).

#### *The weight of the political situation*

Besides the cultural framework, the political context has a high impact. Especially in 2002, at the height of military escalation, the whole society was severely affected. Schools and youth were not exempted from military clashes. The Israeli army searched school buildings, some of which were destroyed, others transformed into temporary prisons, places for interrogation or army sieges. According to Defense for Children International (<http://www.dci-pal.org>, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006) 745 children (aged between 0 and 17) have been killed since the end of September 2000; many were injured; 423 are currently held in detention. Many hours of teaching being lost especially in 2002, due to the curfews imposed.

Though the military situation has since calmed, life has not become easier. Travel restrictions persist, closures, house demolitions, and more or less "targeted" incursions continue. Between 2002 and 2006 the building of the "wall" significantly advanced to reach completion of almost 50%. So far, it already cuts off whole areas from the surrounding crop fields or neighboring communities. While financial aid and external support somewhat helps to remedy the situation around Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Ramallah, the Southern and Northern West Bank as well as Gaza receive a lot less and therefore struggle a lot. Palestine's dependency on external financial support became strikingly obvious within the recent months. Despite the day-to-day hardship of the people, funds have been cut off for the Palestinian Authority following the electoral victory of Hamas. While alternative ways to channel money into Palestine are under preparation, all governmental institutions remain incapable of paying most of the salaries thereby causing a tremendous impact on the national economy.

The violence associated with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict deeply penetrates the whole society and especially affects women and youth. Additionally, youth is highly exposed to an internalized form of violence such as violence within peer groups and families (domestic violence) and at schools. Men's frustration over unemployment and humiliation also results in violence against their children and wives. While we have experienced a high awareness at the Ministry of Education and among the counselors to work on the issue of violence at schools, ambivalence remains. Although officially forbidden, beating of students by teachers still exists. Further, it is impossible to deny that violence applied to the outside by Palestinians in the context of the military confrontation certainly also effects the Palestinian society from within. Addressing this issue around the use and the effects of violence is often sensitive. It risks starting quickly a very difficult and delicate discussion around the justification of its application.

#### *Conflict Transformation in the context of politics and the cultural framework*

How does Constructive Conflict Transformation outlined in this manual as a method developed "in the West" apply in this context? Although, this issue came up, it was never really the question of *if* to apply these methods, but rather *how* to apply them. The response by the participants of the projects justified this approach. Certainly, it is not possible to address this issue here comprehensively but there is room to outline a condensed version of the experience and conclusions made throughout the projects.

Collectivity and individuality are often understood as being mutually exclusive. However, is this really the case? The characteristics of each person are based on the dynamic between dependence (collectivism) and autonomy (individualism). Therefore, the question could be a different one: how does the individual fit in the collectivity, and how does the collectivity rely on the individual? This involves two approaches in order to achieve a functioning society.

\* Only in few places, it is actually a wall. However, it then rises to up to 8 meters. Mostly, the separation barrier is a complex system of double fences, barbed wire, dikes, patrol streets and motion detectors.



The first one insists initially on the collective assuming that the individual will be doing fine if the collective does so. This is reflected in the method of Sulha, which insists first on reestablishing the collective. The other approach is through the individual. If the individual is doing fine, this also affects the collective positively. Constructive Conflict Transformation does so. For example, teachers (or counselors) - representative of authority - traditionally take up the responsibility of settling conflicts. Constructive Conflict Transformation however, encourages the students to take this responsibility themselves. In order to have them assume this responsibility the individual is empowered first. After this, s/he is to act consciously and responsibly for the group's benefit as a whole.

Working with one or the other concept certainly depends very much on the framework. Mediation for example is a tool that is actually applied in schools in Palestine while on a larger community level Sulha appears to be the more appropriate approach. One should keep in mind that using Sulha, people manage to settle even high escalated conflicts such as for example murder on a community level, a state of acceptance that mediation has not reached in the West!

#### *What proved to be effective in our training programs?*

In our work context, people expressed the need to get ideas and to learn about strategies of how to deal with conflicts and violence in families, in the community, in schools, universities, or at work. In the training courses, these needs could partly be addressed. Additionally, for women it was important to discuss their possible range and strategies of intervention to enable them to take a more active part instead of having a passive role and being reliant on a male senior community member. In this way, working on conflict transformation skills is part of a wider empowerment process.

#### *Wording*

The definition of conflict in the Palestinian context needs to be considered carefully. It was helpful to talk about *Conflict Management* and not *Resolution*. Due to use of language in Palestine, talking about *Conflict Management* allows a direct connotation to low escalated community and family conflicts while *Conflict Resolution* is often used to refer to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We did not use *transformation* because it is difficult to translate into Arabic and people could not easily connect to it, while everybody has an idea what *management* is about. Additionally, *management* implies an active role of the individual and does not pretend that the conflict will vanish after it has been dealt with.

#### *Victimization, stress and trauma*

The daily confrontation with the military occupation and violence, the apparent impasse in finding a sustainable, acceptable and just solution causes a lot of frustration and resignation, stress and trauma. Throughout the project, it proved to be possible and necessary to provide the trainees with a secure space that may relieve stress through physical activities or discussion of their violent experiences. However, only psychologists specialized in trauma may deal with such cases. Additionally, we were very careful not to force our participants to deal with and to define their position within 'the conflict' (referring to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict). To do so would have made it extremely difficult to step away from the role of the powerless victim thus hindering the development of a positive definition of conflict. Additionally, this might have jeopardized the building of trust between the - western - trainers and the trainees: trainees could have felt us wanting to teach them how they are supposed to behave in order to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This entails the risk of them feeling less accepted in their situation. In any case, the transfer of conflict transformation skills (i.e. communication and analytical skills, change of perspective) on different conflicts is possible once the trainees understood that this approach (win-win) and the related attitude is the most promising way to deal with a conflict.

#### *Communication*

Direct communication - as used in Germany for example - is applied to a lesser extent around the world. In some contexts, it is considered as an offense. Anyhow, in some situations we felt we need a

translator not for the language itself but for the content of the message. It proved to be very important to be sensitive for indirect communication. In some case, it is also perfectly right to rely on the Palestinian co-trainer or other confidants in order to comprehend a situation. However, we could as well play on our external status and openly ask if we felt lost. We experienced that people do not expect us to use the same communication style as they do. Moreover, in the trainings on conflict transformation it was fully acceptable to emphasize the need to speak for oneself ('I' and not 'we'), and to express feelings directly. As in other cultural settings, this is not an easy task and needs practice.

#### *Continuity*

In the context of Constructive Conflict Transformation, continuity and stability is very important. Yet, one needs to be aware that in a country under such circumstances there are many structural, administrative and organizational challenges. Additionally, the above-mentioned recent cuts of international funds extremely jeopardize stability and continuity. It becomes tremendously difficult to establish solid sustainable structures. However, providing a stable framework for the trainings was supportive to ensure as much continuity and sustainability as possible. Transparency in objectives and approach, as well as clear timeframe influenced the training process in a positive way. Additionally, it was very beneficial to develop ideas and strategies together with the trainees on how to implement the trained skills. Therefore, it was very helpful to support the infrastructure in remote areas (i.e. opening women centers in which the trainees could implement their activities). Generally we got a very positive feedback on the fact that we designed lasting training programs (i.e. eight three days seminars over one year) integrating trainees from different parts of the Westbank.

#### *A perspective for the future*

Especially for youth, questions remain as to the role of traditionalism, external influence from the West and a possibility to find their own way in between these two. Tools and methods around Constructive Conflict Transformation such as communication and self-awareness may offer support in finding this third way. The decision, however, to take advantage of this opportunity has to be made by the participants themselves. According to the philosophy advocated in this manual, a trainer facilitates processes, based on the needs and impulses from within the group rather than dictating a course.

#### *Bi-national teamwork*

Working as foreigner in Palestine was sometimes an advantage, as difficult questions and taboo subjects were more easily discussed with an outsider. This of course required time to build trust and did not start immediately! In all it proved very effective to work in a bi-national training team. This includes the usual advantages of working in a team such as discussion and reflection before and after training session (or the project in general). Additionally, 'playing' with the roles of both an insider and outsider proved beneficial for the training process. For example, the Palestinian trainer could criticize internal cultural features and could be explicitly provocative; for the external trainer it was easier to introduce so-called different or western methods, which challenged the group more implicitly. Especially enriching was the close exchange and the mutual intercultural learning that allowed the crossing of borders between the two societies.

by Ulrike Ramlow and Stephan Clauss

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# 1. About Conflict and Violence, Constructive Conflict Transformation and Nonviolence



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## 1.1 Conflict and Violence

### 1.1.1 Defining conflict

What is a conflict? "Two people in a fight" one might answer quickly. Yet, when trying to find a suitable definition it turns out not to be so easy. In Arabic, there are even various terms for different kinds of conflicts: "Nisea" is usually interpreted as social conflict while conflicts on a high political level are referred to as "Sirea"; just to give one example. Usually, conflicts occur between two parties: between colleagues, friends, families, and nations involving less or more people. However, conflicts do not need to involve two sides: sometimes one has a conflict with oneself.

In order to work on conflicts or – to use a very common term - to manage, transform or resolve them, (conflict resolution, transformation or management), it is important to be clear about a definition. Friedrich Glasl<sup>1</sup>, an Austrian political scientist and expert in conflict transformation, defines social conflict as follows:

*"an interaction between two or more people, groups or organizations which is lived by one of the sides as incompatible with their thoughts, feelings and intentions. At least one of the two sides experiences the other side interfering with its thoughts, feelings and intentions."*

This definition could suggest that differences are the root cause of conflicts. However, the mere existence of difference does not necessitate conflict. Differences are very natural and omnipresent. We look different, have different opinions, different cultures, languages, different needs etc. The more salient question is, how differences are dealt with. Very often, a lack of communication, miscommunication or the complete absence of communication contributes a conflict starting. In dealing with conflict, it is important to have a clear understanding of the elements that comprise it: who are the actors, what are the aims and the mechanisms they employ, what are the dynamics? Johan Galtung a leading Swedish professor for peace and conflict research, introduces the conflict triangle (see illustration), in one of his books<sup>2</sup>.

He suggests that conflict involves three major components, which are behavior, context/contradiction and attitude. Usually, what we observe first when a conflict erupts is the *behavior*: arguing, abusive language, yelling, curses, withdrawal or even violence. Often it is difficult to understand clearly the underlying causes of this behavior. The reasons may be difficult to trace, or not visible at all. According to Galtung the two other components that are inherent to a conflict are a *contradiction/the context* and the *attitude*. Here contradiction refers to the goals of the actors that clash (or contradict) through an engagement. This could involve the opposing interests, aims, needs etc. of the two parties. One could also talk about the *context* addressing the overall situation in which the conflict takes place. The component of the attitude refers to the contributing feelings and assumptions of the actors such as fear, mistrust, racism etc.

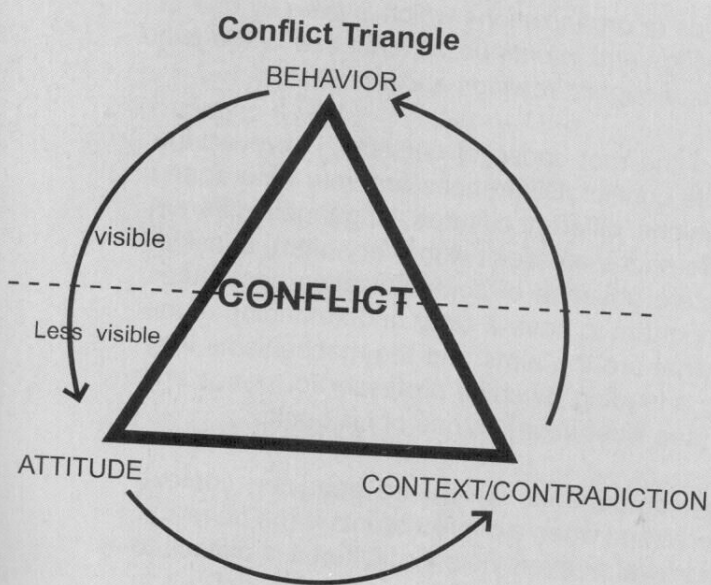
The following example may illustrate the different contributing components: During break-time at school, two boys get into a violent fight in the schoolyard. A teacher interferes, separates them and decides to punish them both: they need to write an essay about how to behave



correctly in the yard during break-time. Referring back to the triangle, the *behavior* is the fight between the students and the interference of the teachers. The teacher's believes that the most appropriate or effective way to handle the situation is through coercive means (i.e., enforced punishment) which is his/her *attitude*. S/he may not want or be able to consider the *context*; the deeper background to the conflict. One issue could be the lack of sufficient space and means of distraction for the youth in the schoolyard. After sitting in a classroom for long hours, kids need a way to channel their physical energy, if this is not possible due to a lack of space for recreation at home or at school. This could lead to the increased violent behavior of children. The contextual causes of a conflict tend to be vast. In this case, it may be important to consider the individual background of the two children in their school and home environments in order to find out about the *contradictions* that might have contributed to the boys getting in a fight.

The three aspects of the triangle are interdependent and influence each other. Sometimes people view this as a vicious circle and, looking at the complexity of the whole conflict, do not know where to start. However, this vicious circle can also turn into a "magic circle": even working on just one aspect will eventually influence the whole system.

Galtung has chosen to focus of certain aspects. Yet there are many more aspects to a conflict than can be encompassed in this model. There is an abundance of other models. Each one of them takes a slightly different focus or view conflict from a different angle. Some of these other models, such as the Iceberg, the Onion or Conflict Mapping will be introduced later in this manual.

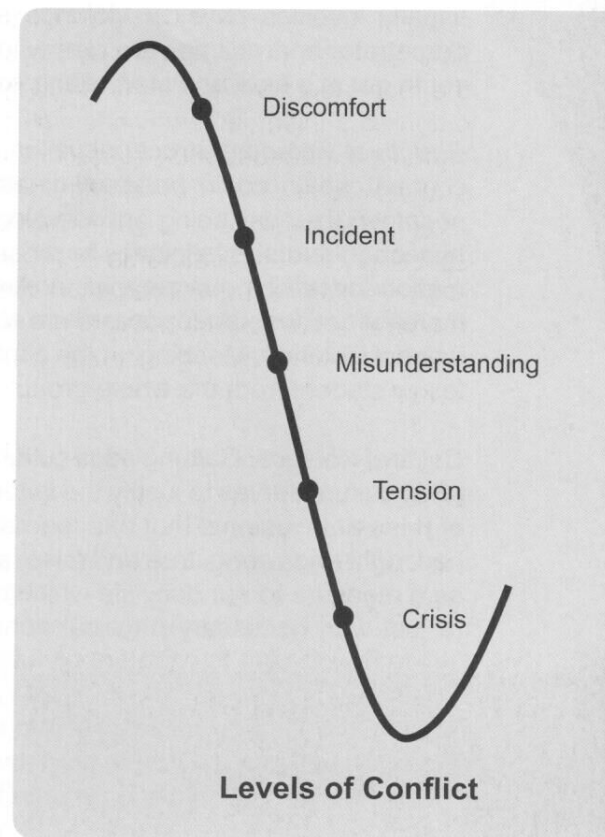


Conflicts usually do not occur just like that. Often times, what can be witnessed is the clash, but not the history that led to it. Let us look at the following story: Miriam is new in the class. She seemed to be getting along well. However, one day her teacher asked her to read aloud in English, Samira starts laughing and making fun of her. Miriam reacts by screaming at her to shut up. What has happened?

- In the beginning, there is a feeling of discomfort. Samira has always taken a lead role in the class and felt insecure about a new girl arriving. Maybe nothing has really happened yet, nothing was said. Yet, the situation just does not feel right. It is difficult to identify the problem.
- Miriam gets along well with the new classmates but is annoyed by Samira's bossy attitude. Miriam finds that Samira is always trying to impose on others her opinion and the way she wants things to be said and done. Then there was an incident during one of the breaks. Samira insisted to play a certain game. Miriam was unwilling to and

snapped at her. It was something minor, simply not agreeing on what to play, and did not seem to leave any lasting internal reactions, yet both felt upset, irritated or unhappy with the outcome of the situation.

- Both continue to think about the details of the situation. The feelings, motives and responsibilities are misinterpreted or confused. Samira does not understand why Miriam snapped at her and Miriam thinks that Samira is really exaggerating. Misunderstandings arise. There is no real satisfying answer for either of them on how to handle the situation.
- The tension starts rising between them, thereby affecting their relationship. A feeling of anxiety and tension grows between them. Each subsequent experience seems to confirm the negative attitude towards the other. The relationship becomes a mutual source of constant worry and concern.
- Finally, this leads to the above-mentioned crisis. This is a major explosion or clash because of the built up tension. Sometimes extreme measures are applied, normal functioning becomes difficult, and the behavior is affected. Thoughts of a possible rupture in a relationship or violence may prevail.



While the conflict triangle insists that it is important to consider various aspects of conflict, the conflict level model shows that it is also crucial to look at the history of a conflict in order to be able to understand its dynamics<sup>3</sup>.

### 1.1.2 Defining violence

Violence can be understood as a further or extreme escalation of a conflict or crisis, though this is not always the imperative consequence of a conflict. The previous chapter about conflict has already anticipated a lot of the definition of violence: there is a history, various aspects influence the development of violence and some things are more visible than others are. What we perceive mostly is a certain violent behavior: the physical outbreak of violence such as beating. Yet, as with conflict, there is more to violence than the visually apparent. Johan Galtung who developed a standard definition of violence, states that *"[violence is] present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realization."*<sup>4</sup>

Thus, he suggests that violence is not only physical beating, but any force that inhibits a person in his/her development or well-being. Galtung distinguishes between different types of violence: direct, cultural and structural violence, which he graphically arranged in a triangle as seen below.

*Direct violence:* This kind of violence is also referred to as personal violence: A visible incident



usually involves physical violence such as beating or killing. The action(s), the actors - perpetrator and victims - are clearly identifiable. Direct violence, for example is at school when youth get in a fight and start hitting each other or verbal abuse.

**Structural violence:** Structural violence is an indirect form of violence. It is linked to a certain context, which could be discriminatory laws or social injustice. These circumstances limit people in their wellbeing and development, and in severe cases can even cause their death. In school, structural violence is present for example through the lack of sufficient space and means for teaching or recreation. Another example is that students do not have educational material because their parents are too poor to afford it. Another term for structural violence is indirect violence. Mobbing, in the context of schools the intended and prolonged exclusion of a fellow student from the whole group, is one example that also happens very often in schools.

**Cultural violence:** Galtung adds cultural violence to the two kinds of direct and indirect violence: often culture serves to justify the latter forms of violence. A possible definition of culture is a set of rules and customs that one learns early in life. Accordingly, we then classify into good and bad, right and wrong, true and false, sacred and profane etc. These standards are then applied as a measure to our daily life which might result in a justification for direct or indirect violence (a just war, necessary physical punishment etc.). Cultural violence has long-term features.

In schools, cultural violence exists if certain students - possibly because of their religion - are excluded or discriminated against because of certain traditions or customs prevailing in the society. Another example is the role of men and women in the society. In most cultures of the world men traditionally hold positions of authority in general and specifically over women. In the daily school life, this may result into especially male students easily undermining the authority of female teachers.

In schools, there is a lot of talk about the violence present. Usually, this only refers to direct violence: children hitting each other. Yet, as the triangle proves, direct violence is not the only form that exists. It is not possible to deal with just one, as all forms of violence are linked to each other. That means that each type of violence may entail another: unjust treatment caused by structural violence (like students from very poor families who might not even

have enough to eat) very often results in some kind of direct violence. In this context, it is also important to understand the subjective aspect of violence: an incident, action or circumstance that one person might not interpret as violence, might be experienced by someone else as violent. Moreover, we need to be aware that each one of us is part of a larger system in which violence is present: therefore, violence is in each one of us and is part of daily life. In conclusion, the aim cannot be to make violence totally disappear, but to find ways of dealing with it and decreasing its occurrence. A deeper understanding of various types and the dynamics around violence helps with this.

